

Super Kmart Center spruces up for debut - San Antonio Express-News (TX) - February 18, 1994 - page 1D

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Shawn Davis, Texas Longhorn cap and flannel shirt askew, is a cheerleader for the new Super Kmart Center at Nakoma Drive and U.S. 281.

Davis, a 22-year-old Madison High School graduate, is training to be a garden-shop associate in the 700-employee store under preparation for a "soft" opening Feb. 25. Its grand opening is scheduled for March 3.

He answered regional manager William Bradley correctly Thursday during the morning pep rally.

"What's that giant sucking noise?" Bradley asked, referring to an anticipated sound when Super Kmart cracks its doors for the first time, and also making a reference to former presidential candidate Ross Perot, who had predicted such a sound would be heard as U.S. jobs headed to Mexico with passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"Wal-Mart!" Davis shouted, alluding to grocery-selling Wal-Mart from which Kmart reportedly has siphoned business in other markets where the two go head-to-head.

The pep rally, like those before Friday night football games, will become routine at the 24-hour, 179,623 square-foot center at **12300 San Pedro Ave.** And Kmart officials predict that customers will want to join in.

What distinguishes this store from other Kmart stores is that it features dry-cleaning, shoe repair, optometry services and groceries among standard dry goods such as Rubbermaid products and compact discs featuring "Musica Latina."

"We will have the most extensive selection in this market," said Jon Wheeler, the store's general manager.

Troy, Mich.-based Kmart plans to open four more super stores in San Antonio by 1995 - two of them in 1994.

To make room for the additions, Kmart plans to close traditional locations, including five of 10 in this region.

Two other San Antonio Super Kmart stores are being built at Marbach Road and Loop 410, and O'Connor Road and Interstate 35.

The store is going to try to outprice competitors in an already highly competitive market.

The stakes between San Antonio-based H-E-B and Texans' Supermarkets - a division of Mesa, Ariz.-based Megafoods Stores Inc. - increased last week when Texans' announced plans to buy 21 Handy Andy Inc. stores.

San Antonio-area food prices are among the lowest in the nation.

Some of Super Kmart's amenities resemble those at the H-E-B Marketplace on the southeast corner of Loop 410 and Bandera Road.

Kiosks featuring fresh deli items, salads to-go and just-baked cookies dominate one corner of the facility.

But instead of video games and other arcades, another section will be used as a mini-daycare center for children ages 3 to 10, Wheeler said. And Little Caesars is leasing some space to serve hungry shoppers.

With the Super Kmart opening, Kmart will operate 138 stores in Texas, employing 17,213 people. The first Super Kmart opened in Medina, Ohio, in July 1991. Today, Kmart has 19 of the super stores.

PHOTO BY JERRY LARA

Employees take a break Thursday outside the Super Kmart Center at 12300 San Pedro Ave., which will have a grand opening March 3.

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